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Holiday Season Issue

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL ATARI USERS' GROUP

December 1986 – January 1987

Reports from COMDEX and The Canadian Computer Show

Mark Skapinker Speaks Out!

The British Connection....**STUser Magazine**

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BYTOWN BYTES

December 1986 – January 1987

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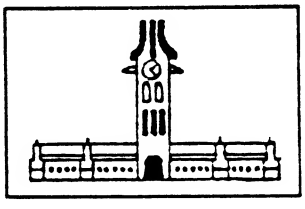

N.C.A.U.G. 1987 MEETING SCHEDULE

ST Meetings will be held the last Tuesday of every month; XE Meetings the last Saturday of every month.

ST MEETINGS TUESDAY 7 PM	XE MEETINGS SAT. 9:30 AM
Dec. 9	(combined ST/XE)
Jan. 27	Jan. 31
Feb. 24	Feb. 28
Mar. 24	Mar. 28

Meetings held in the auditorium of the NRC Building, 100 Sussex Drive.

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Exchange Subscriptions are available to other Atari User Groups. Send exchange newsletters to Dave Sarles at the address shown above.

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Submissions of articles or advertising copy, subscription requests or back issue orders should be sent to the N.C.A.U.G. at the address above. Local members wishing to submit articles may leave them at G Plus, 130 Albert Street. The deadline for articles and ads is the 12th day of the preceding month.

RAMTOP REMARKS

This is it for 1986. Its been quite a year. Our membership increased from 80 to 205 ST and 49 XE.

Other highlites of the past year were the start up of the NCAUG ST bulletin board, capably run by our SYSOP Craig Tremblay. The XE board was moved and is now run by Guy Gervais. And the newsletter took on quite a transformation, from a photcopied stapled issue to a saddle stitched format with a colored glossy cover.

Then there was the constitution. Some changes were passed in October, and while some of you may not care, these changes allow the NCAUG to function a bit smoother, providing we can fill the executive and committee positions. Which brings me to my next topic.....1987. This will be the last reminder that nominations for positions within the NCAUG executive will be accepted at the January meetings and in February we will form the 1987 executive. There is a good chance that certain members of the executive will not be standing for nomination in 1987 (where have you heard that before?).

And finally our 1987 meeting schedule has been set. It reads quite simply; the ST meetings are held on the last Tuesday of each month and the XE meetings are held on the last Saturday of each month. Yes, the XE meeting will sometimes fall before the ST meeting.

The meeting times and place are the same as this year; ST at 1900 Hrs., and XE at 0930 Hrs. in the auditorium of the NRC building at 100 Sussex Drive.

See you next year. Have a happy Holiday Season.

Don Krentz
Director, NCAUG

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The Editor Writes

Ah yes....the beginning of winter. The time of year when all computerists sneak away to their basements/ dens/ or spare rooms to curl up with their computer to wait out the rages of winter (and wives).

Welcome to our Christmas/New Years newsletter. Our mysterious 'Byte This' columnist seems to have been getting into the holiday spirit already.

Featured this month is the transcript of the presentation that Mark Skapinker of Batteries Included gave the NCAUG at the September meeting. Also this month we introduce a major new periodical for the ST, called STUser.

Also in this newsletter we have two poems from a couple of NCAUG members who wish to remain anonymous (maybe rightly so). As fillers we have provided you with some words of wisdom about the 'laws' of computing. We hope to print the whole series of these 'laws' in a future issue.

The newsletter staff also gets to take a break over the holidays; so this newsletter will have to keep everyone going over the holiday season. The next newsletter (February 1986) will be available at the January meetings.

Some of you may have noticed that this newsletter is a bit late. Due to two power failures on critical newsletter assembly nights we missed the deadline to get the newsletter to the printer in time to distribute at the ST meeting in November. God knows we tried, but you have no idea how hard it is to do paste up and assembly by coal oil lamps. We gave up when we ran out of coal oil and only had candle light remaining! It was decided to hold the newsletter and print it in time for distribution at the combined December meeting. By doing this we were able to include four more pages of information on the COMDEX show in Las Vegas and The Canadian Computer Show in Toronto.

Keep those articles coming! The deadline for the next issue is 12 January.

Until next time ... happy computing.

Bob Thompson
Editor

The Night Before Xmas

(WITH APOLOGIES TO CLEMENT C. MOORE)

'Twas the night before Christmas,
and all through the house
not a peripheral was stirring
not even the two button mouse.

The disk drives were plugged
into their I/O's with care,
in hopes that new software
t'would soon be there;

The joysticks were nestled
all snug on the shelf
while visions of zapping Zylons
danced through their buttons;

My floppy in pocket
and I with my manual,
had just settled my brain
for a long disk copy nap,

When out of the modem
there arose such a chatter,
I awoke from my stupor
to see what was the matter.

Away to the monitor,
I flew like Flash,
turned on its power
hidding pirated D/L's in the trash.

When, on the monitor
to my wondering eyes did appear,
but a miniature micro,
and eight socketed chips.

With a bald headed user
so lively and quick
I knew in a moment
it must be St. Jack

More rapid than falling prices
his system did come,
and he whistled, and shouted
and called it by name:

"Now, XL! Now XE!
Now, 520 and 1040 ST!
On, GTIA! On, Midi!
On disks both soft and hard!
To the top of sales!
To the top of the market!
Now slash away! Slash away!
Slash away, all!"

So into my memory
Jacks system did D/L.
With my system full of utilities,
and St. Jack too,

And then in a twinkling
I heard in my drive
the whirling and chirping
of each tiny byte.

As I drew back in amazement
and was muttering aloud,
out of the joystick port
St. Jack came out in a bound.

He was all dressed to kill,
from head to his foot,
and his person was surrounded
by marketing strategies too boot.

A bundle of wares
he had flung on his back,
and he looked like a vendor
opening his CES shack.

His hardware, how innovative!
His marketing, how daring!
While his sales rose like rockets!
The prices did plummet!

He was bold and creative
a right jolly old maverick,
and I cheered when I saw him
in spite of myself;

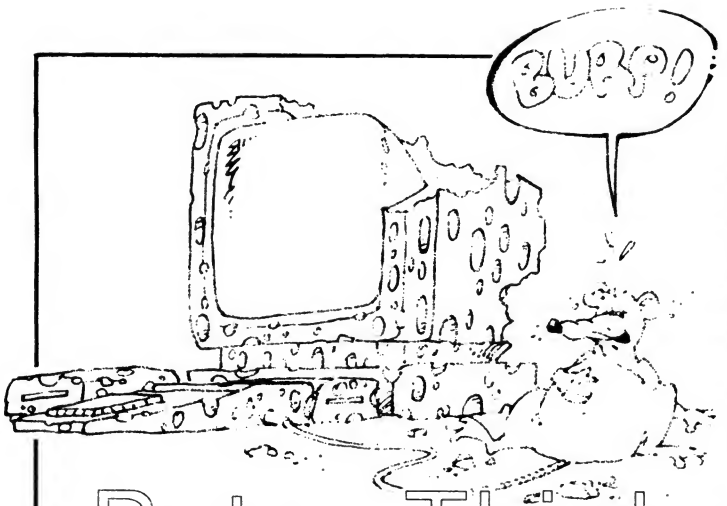
A wink of his eye and
a twist of his head
let other companies know
they had something to dread.

He gouged not a penny, but
went straight to his business
of filling my system up
so it had the works,

And laying his hand
on the pirated software I had hid
he shook his head
and said, "Don't do this!"

He ported to his system,
to his CPU gave a command,
and away they disappeared
like Commodore, on its last stand.

But I heard him exclaim
ere he logged off for the night
"Happy Computing to all,
and to all Power Without the Price!"



Byte This!

This morning I looked at my handy desk accessory calendar and realized it's August 52, 1899. That means I'd better get started with my Christmas shopping. I shop the same way as everyone else; wander around stores for weeks looking at everyone else wandering around the stores then buy the rat kids the one thing I've refused to let them have all year and the skimpiest nightdress I can find for fruit loops.

I jump-started my car and as I was driving into town, I passed a store with a big sign out in front "COMMODORE LIQUIDATION". I went inside and found an iron pot bubbling away in the centre of the showroom, filled with a foul-smelling brown fluid. There was nothing on display to interest me but I left the store with a good idea of my first gift. Christmas is to show loved ones how much you care - I'll buy the computer a present.

If I'm going to shop for a gift to give the hated computer I don't dare let fruit loops know what I'm doing or she'll make good her threat of shoving a cattle prod into it's serial port. In order to give me several hours of free time to shop without arousing suspicion, I phoned home and told her I was having a vasectomy. I'd be home after supper.

Our local Atari dealer is also an Instant Muffler Shop so while I was getting my clamps tightened I headed into the showroom to look for a gift. The whole wall was a display of mufflers and modems, exhausts and eproms, not to mention shock adsorbers, springs and mouse pads.

As I stood looking at this wonderful array, a salesman slithered up to me with a power supply in one hand and a battery charger in the other, not knowing whether I was AC or DC. I can't repeat the conversation with the salesman because I can't giggle the way he did but everything was normal when I told him that I wanted to buy some software. The conversation was still OK when I told him that it was a Christmas gift and only fell apart after he asked me who the gift was for. I told him that it was for the computer, so I wanted something that the computer would enjoy.

That's when he began to giggle and told me that a computer has no brains and doesn't know what software it's using so how can it enjoy anything. Now my wife got the name "fruit loops" because she has no brains, but she enjoys sneaking out in the middle of the night to turn on my headlights so that my car battery is dead when I leave in the morning. My rat kids don't have any brains but they enjoy watching me try to start my car and I happen to know that my computer has 512K of brains so it should enjoy a whole potful of anything.

If I enjoyed playing games then so should the computer so I began to look at the choices offered. There was a whole shelf of adult games with costumes such as fishnet stockings for the keyboard and inflatable dolls that plugged into the midi port but I thought that 512K of brains was beyond that. However, I did buy a doll for myself (I've only got 6K of brains).

The next shelf was educational software which looked about as exciting as watching disks format but the last shelf was arcade games. This was the answer. It could murder bugs, monsters, aliens, birds, orcs and bouncing tomatoes. It could fly through hyperspace or burrow through subterranean innerspace. It could zip past cars on a highway or zap ugly little devils in an arena. Best of all it was fun!

But one of the boxes went to great lengths to explain how much computing was needed to produce only one screen and the screens flashed several times a second which was a lot of work. No computer would be happy working this hard. This was about the same as giving me 8 tons of sand and 132 bags of cement for my birthday. If software was this much work for a computer, then I needed another gift.

I know, I'll buy it a Pet. Something that's not too bright, can't do much except make noise and look pretty, but with a lot of patience and time can be trained to be useful. There's an Amiga store down the street.

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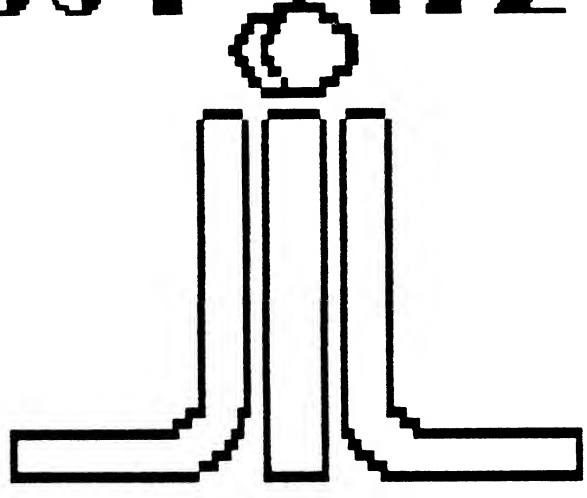


WE'RE NOT JUST PLAYING GAMES.
WHY NOT COME IN FOR A PEACH OF A DEAL.

COMDEX · FALL '86

Report by Joe Kuffner

Twice per year, there occurs a "once in a lifetime" computer exhibition at which dealers, publishers, manufacturers, designers, programmers and press are gathered together to see what's new, what's old and what's gold in the computer industry. This event is called COMDEX (COMputer Distributors EXhibition). This year's fall show certainly lived up to its reputation of being the largest computer show in America. Exhibitors filled the halls of the Las Vegas Convention Center (all halls) and spilled over into the convention facilities of another four (4) Vegas hotels. This represents over one million square feet of floor space showing computer hardware, software and peripherals. The exhibition was attended by some 80 to 85 thousand interested viewers. I happened to be one of those attendees.

Before getting into the Atari particulars, let me pass on some of the highlights of the show. Desktop publishing was everywhere. And little wonder, with this sector of the computer industry predicted to generate billions of dollars in revenue in the coming year. Another area of interest was the use of Intel's new 80386 microprocessor in new computers, capable of performing some 4 million instructions per second! Yet another area of interest is the abundance of new IBM clones for under $1000. Even Korean car manufacturers were into the IBM cloning business! And, probably the best non-Atari news of all was the fact that both Apple Computer and Commodore Business Machines were nowhere to be found!!

Let's get into the really important news from COMDEX. Atari is alive and well! Their booth had to be the busiest and most crowded at the show. As usual, Atari had software developers and suppliers manning the stations within the booth showing off their latest wares. I'll get into the specifics in a moment. Atari had meeting rooms in their booth with on-going meetings between Atari personnel and investors, suppliers and buyers. Word has it that their agenda was so full for the week, that they had to limit each meeting to 15 minutes in length, in order to meet with all those that were scheduled. This has got to be good news for Atari and definitely shows that there is a strong interest in the company from the computer industry.

Atari was showing their new blitter chip inside an operating 1040ST. The demo showed 5 flying parrots (similar to the Bird public domain demo) next to an "unblittered" 1040 running the same demo. Certainly the blitter chip makes a noticeable difference. Also, they were showing the conversion of Microsoft Write. Look for its release Jan '87 In private, I'm told, Atari was showing to invited guests only, an Atari STI computer. No word yet on what this is, unfortunately. Also, from Atari, who, incidently supplied all of the equipment for their booth, were 20 meg hard drives and the new SC1224 monitors (manufactured by Gold Star). I was told that these new monitors were not the new monitors to be shipped with the new ST computers (others with higher specifications will be produced and shipped). These monitors look like the monochrome monitors except that they are color, naturally.

Displaying their utility/programming products at the Atari booth were: Beckemeyer Tools showing their new UNIX OS in an MS Shell environment; Metacomco, a British company, showing various programming languages including a 68000 assembler, BCPL, Lattice C, Pascal and Cambridge Lisp; Computer Tools International showing their port of the UNIX IDRIS OS; and, Mark Williams C was also being shown.

Showing productivity tools at the booth were: Time Works demonstrating DataManager ST, SwiftCalc, WordWriter (looks great!) and two new programs in the Sylvia Porter series, Financial Planner, and SwifTax, both coming in early '87; Regent Software were showing off their new Regent Word II (Gem based) Word Processor and a new version of Regent Base; SoftLab were there with a port from the IBM called LaserEdit; Progressive Peripheral, another British company, with an integrated spreadsheet/graphics package that also does project planning and critical path analysis; DAC Software showing the database program, DACEasy; MaxThink with the MaxThink idea processing program; Video-Touch had an Order Entry System which looked very impressive; Abacus Software had PC Board Designer up and running, Datatrieve, a new database, and a new spreadsheet program called PowerPlan; Software Punch had version 2.28 of its integrated Word Processing package, Boftin and an accessory word processor, PunchPad. Also look for PunchNet, a

networking system for the ST also from Software Punch; SBT (Small Business Technology) had a whole line-up of database Accounting modules for Atari's dBMan, including General Ledger, Sales Order Processing, Billing/Inven-tory, Accounts Receivable, Accounts Payable and Purchase Orders; ISD Marketing had the long-awaited Gem version of VIP Professional which looked great and seemed to solve the slow screen manipulations of earlier versions (the update is available for $19.95 direct from ISD); and, Royal Software was showing EZ-Calc, an integrated Gem based spreadsheet/graphing program.

A full corner of the Atari booth was dedicated to MIDI music on the ST. Four companies, BeamTeam, Electronic Music Publishers, Hybrid Arts and MidiSoft, were demoing their software and music on the Yamaha DX7, Kawai K3, and a Casio CZ1000. It was music to my ears (and everyone else's at COMDEX). This portion of the booth, which occupied the single most amount of area, constantly entertained the large audiences with digital sounds that you would only expect from your HIFI.

Displaying entertainment and educational software in the booth were: Unicorn Software showing their educational line of software; Activision showing Basketball, Shanghai, and Tass Times in ToneTown, a graphics/text adventure and, watch in early '87 for Championship Baseball and Football; Eidersoft was showing ST Karate and a rash of other great games; Scorpio was giving away $100 in gambling chips while demoing Professor Craps, a craps simulation. Hard to tell whether this is educational or entertaining. Apparently, it's both!; Even Electronic Arts got in the act by showing their new releases of ChessMaster 2000 and Skyfox which are to be released by January; and, Shelbourne Software was showing ST-Pool and their new program ST-Shuffleboard which uses the mouse as if it were the actual Shuffleboard "rock". The most exciting and audience thrilling game shown, however, had to be the after hours demonstration of a 15 player (and 15 computer) game called "Killa Happy Face" distributed by the XANTH SST User's Group. This game pitted all of the players against each other, operating a different happy face (using a joystick) through a large maze. The machines were connected together by cables at the MIDI port. The object was to be the last player "alive". The game played so well that it was impossible to notice that all the players were on different computers. An excellent programming effort.

Graphics oriented software was also on display: Michtron, demonstrating their new Pro Quality digitizer as well as their full line of software products; PCA, showing their newest version of the Graphic Artist; ComputerEyes was demonstrating a color digitizing program which created color, Degas format pictures of actual people in 6 seconds!; speaking of Degas, Batteries Included and Tom Hudson were showing off Degas Elite (If you don't yet have this one, go buy it, now!); and speaking of Tom Hudson, Antic magazine was showing a range of its software products, including CAD 3D, written by Tom Hudson, and a very interesting 3D demo (wearing glasses); Generic Card had a new program called AutoCad; AvilaSoft was showing a new animation program called Make It Move; and, Drafix 1 from Foresight Resources, an autocad program ported from the IBM, was also on display at the booth.

What about the show's apparent theme of Desktop Publishing? Yes, there were products in this category too: SoftLogik's Publishing Partner looked at least as good as any publishing package at COMDEX. It looked like a real winner at $149.95 and is to be released in December; Migraph was showing Easy Draw 2.0 demonstrating its application in the desktop publishing field; Virginia's very own XLent Software unveiled its new Typesetter Elite gem-based publishing program (watch for a thorough demo at an upcoming VaST meeting), and its other printing applications, Rubber Stamp and Megafont ST; and, MirrorSoft's Fleet Street Publisher, yet another desktop publishing program, was being shown.

Still other products on display at the Atari booth were: Data Free Inc., a Canadian software company, publisher of the Faster Disk Mag was showing their latest issue which included an excellent poker slot simulation; and, JNL Technology was showing their hardware interface to connect the ST to any monitor (i.e. not the Atari monitor). The only 8-bit showing, also falls into this category, with ICD showing their 850 replacement, called P.R. Connection and their upgrade board which among other things displays 80 columns on the monitor.

As you can see, there were a lot of reasons for the Atari booth to be crowded. So much enthusiasm towards the ST and the range of excellent products

continued on page 32

Mark Skapinker Speaks...

(TO THE NCAUG MEMBERS)

*The following is the text from the speech given at the September 27th meeting by **Mark Skapinker, Product Development Manager of Batteries Included.** **Mark** is the author of **Thunder!** and co-author of the **Isgur Portfolio System.** In a recent telephone conversation, **Mark** told me that he was leaving **Batteries Included** at the end of October to set up his own business (unfortunately that business does not involve writing ST software). He will be missed by the **Atari** community, and we look forward to his return. Please Note: All opinions expressed here are those of **Mark Skapinker** and not necessarily those of **Batteries Included.***

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to this group. Atari users groups are always the most enjoyable places to speak - there is always an element of interest, and more stimulating - criticism.

I presume that those of you that are not familiar with **Batteries Included** are wondering how the company was named, and what exactly it is that we do, so here goes. The company was started in Toronto in 1978 as a retail store selling calculators, hand held electronic games and small computers. In order to meet the competition and offer something unique "the batteries were included" free of charge with every product sold. Within two years, the store numbered among the largest **Commodore** dealers in Canada. With the microcomputer revolution, the company began to develop productivity software for the home, school and workplace. This proved to be an incredibly successful formula. The **PaperClip** Word Processor and the **Consultant** data base manager were among the first truly useful pieces of software developed for the 8 bit market. **PaperClip** soon reached Billboard magazine, reached number 1 in January, 1985 and has been in the top 10 for over a year. In 1983, **Batteries** started getting involved in the **Atari** Community - this happened at about the same time as **Michael Reichmann** - an long-time avid **Atari** fan joined the company, and then when **Marty Herzog** -yet another **Atari** fan became involved. **Paperclip** was developed as a new, improved product for the **Atari**. The company grew rapidly, and today has over 50 employees at the

Canadian headquarters as well as a US warehouse and distribution centre in Buffalo, New York. The store became a very minor part of the business and was closed, and **Batteries Included** became solely a software publisher. Today, it ranks among the largest independent software publishers in the continental US.

In 1985, BI started developing software for the **Atari ST**. From the first rumours of a low-priced powerful 68000 machine in late 1984, we saw the potential that this machine offered, but more on this later. We climbed on the GEM bandwagon early: we attended the first GEM developers conference in Monterey in February, 1985, and **Batteries Included** was the first software developer, outside of **Digital Research**, to release a GEM product.

PRODUCTIVITY SOFTWARE

Batteries Included is involved in the productivity software marketplace. We define productivity software as software that lets you do whatever you want in a way that is easier to how you were previously doing it. Or, in simpler terms, everything that is not a Game. Examples include word processing, database, spreadsheets, communication software, graphics, spelling checkers, and statistics. We feel that this is the type of software that people want and need.

BI GOES PUBLIC

In July, 1986 BI merged with ITM - a public company - this effectively means that we are now a publically traded company - on the Alberta stock exchange - under ITM. This move has allowed BI to grow further.

THE ATARI ST

As I mentioned earlier, we realized early on that the ST has an incredible potential. I do not want to go into a MAC vs AMIGA vs ST discussion here. Let me just say that for its price, the ST

is probably the best available value on any microcomputer on the market. This user community is growing really fast, and the software for the machine is reaching a maturity much faster than anyone could have wished for.

When we published our first ST product - **DEGAS**, we were unsure just how many copies we would sell in the first year. Without going into details, let me say that we reached those objectives in the first 90 days.

We have since made a commitment to the machine. We are convinced that the ST and Atari's machines that are coming soon are going to succeed. We are determined to make software that will help it do that.

THE MICROCOMPUTER INDUSTRY

The 68000 machines (**MAC**, **ST** and **Amiga**) have made their mark. They have shown the rest of the industry that **MS-DOS** is not invincible and is not the only operating system that can exist. There is a strong market for other systems.

The three most significant changes in the microcomputer industry in the last year are **PRICE**, **PRICE** and **PRICE**. You are now finding machines like the ST and the cheap **MS-DOS** clone is not that far behind anymore. This is causing a lot of new users to start buying microcomputers.

But there are still a lot of people out there not buying computers and a lot of users not utilizing microcomputers to their fullest.

Why? Three reasons.

The main reason is probably **FEAR**. They have all heard about the difficult of use of these machines, some have seen demos and some have even been unlucky enough to have been confronted by the scary **MS-DOS** A> prompt. The rest have probably tried a computer, and decided that they are just not yet worth the effort. It is our belief that using a graphics interface will reach out and overcome this fear. The best example I can use of what we are aiming at is a personal one. Last month, I flew to San Fransisco. It was fairly late at night and I needed transportation while I was there, so I decided to hire a car. The rental agency gave me all the choices - Automatic or manual, Different sizes, radio etc etc. I got into the car in the dark, and drove it off. I had no difficulty finding the clutch, the gas pedal or the brakes. This is exactly what we need to aim at in microcomputer use: namely consistent Easy to use, functionality. I was not concerned with compatibility (my Honda is not GM compatible, and it does not really bother me).

The second reason is cost and time. It is now obvious that an **Atari ST** or an **IBM-PC** compatible with software today will NOT scare off any serious user. What does scare the user is the investment of time and resources. Users are simply not willing to invest the time needed to master **MS-DOS** or most of its current software for anything other than full time use. This is not to say that they are not willing to learn something new, rather that they are not willing to try and learn something that they presume will be very difficult to master.

The third reason is the fault of the microcomputer industry. Potential users have been bombarded with claims that the technology is changing at such a rapid rate that whatever they have will be out of date within a year. The microcomputer industry have convinced people that the only useful computers are **IBM-PC** compatible and must be expensive. The ridiculous notion that one particular machine is a games machine is simply nonsense. A microcomputer is a tool - if someone wants to use their machine as a toy let them. An **Atari ST** is as much a toy as is a Porsche.

THE ANSWER

We believe that the answer to these three major problems is simplicity, standards, and power. The potential user needs to see a microcomputer as a commodity. Look at the VCR market. These machines are not easy to use, the technology is changing all the time, and if any of you have ever read the documentation that comes with a VCR, "user friendly" is not the term I would use to describe them. Why are they then selling at the rate that they are? Potential users know that standards exist. They know that their machines can be used for some length of time. The marketeers have created confidence and a feeling that you cannot possibly live without a VCR.

I believe that this confidence needs to be applied to the microcomputer

industry. It is a complex matter, but ways do exist to reach this end. One of the primary tools at our disposal are through the graphics interface. In terms of ease of use and simplicity, GEM helps: it does not answer all the problems, but what does? The GEM interface allows the user to start using a microcomputer as a tool, not a challenge. It caters for a standard interface, so that you can spend your time learning a new program - not a new way of using the machine for each program.

Power. We believe that powerful software is needed for a powerful machine. With good design, and thought through use, full functionality can be included in cheap powerful programs : Both **Degas** and **Thunder** are proving this for us. There is a whole community of users that do not own microcomputers that I believe will be the next buyers - I refer to professionals and small business. The person who has to pay for their computer themself - the ST with graphic based useful software is ideal for such a person.

THE ST - CURRENT AND FUTURE

The ST is becoming mature. In this month's version of **START**, I wrote an article about our development cycle and experience with the ST. Basically, the article describes our initial frustrations with the machine, and how we used the **IBM PC** as a development machine for **GEM** products on the ST. This is now changing: there are a lot more development tools and utilities that are beginning to make the ST useful. I must stress **BEGINNING**. Their are still a number of flaky parts to the software of the machine: Some of you have probably seen the infamous "**TOS ERROR #35**" mysteriously appearing on your screens. The operating system is not yet completely stable - it is a good version 1, but not good enough to completely rely on yet. I speak to **Atari U.S.**, and know that this is being worked on. **GDOS** is now finished, and a much more stable version of **TOS** is on its way. Hopefully, this will allow developers to make their products much more stable - **Thunder**, our real time spelling checker, relies heavily on the environment of the ST. We have it working in a stable way now, only because we understand the internals of the machine so well. It will only be totally reliable when **TOS** is - fortunately it is soon. The machine needs a lot more tools: its really nice having a hard disk, but the fact that there are no reliable fast backup facilities is unfortunate. Things are happening fast in software, and I expect to see incredible advances in all the software sectors. **GDOS** will enhance the graphics/ text / output relationship in a big way. Hardware is a different story. The machine was incredibly well engineered from the beginning. It is fast, and reliable. Expect to see a lot happening in the near future: things to expect soon are : The blitter chip, the laser printer, built in hard disks, 2 and 4 meg machines, a 68020 multi-tasking system, new detachable keyboards, very high resolution colour and CD ROM. This is just from **Atari** - now that the user base is growing, expect a whole pile of new add-ons.

I want to briefly return to the notion that **Atari** is a games company and the ST is not a serious player. Let me use an analogy to tell you what I really think. Lets compare the micro computer market to the automobile industry in North America - it is not that dissimilar, its just a few years behind with different players. The **IBM PC** is the General Motors of the micro industry - Some people just have to have it, it may not be the latest technology or much fun to use, but it is reliable and has a good name. All of its clones are there, some more powerful like Ford or AT&T , and even some cheap **MS-DOS** clones are doing well again - look at Chrysler. Then there are the BMWs, and Audi's - the yuppie machines, **Apple's MacIntosh**- slick, easy to use, powerful and expensive. There are the machines that are not for everybody, but are powerful in their own right - the SAAB and the **Amiga**. There are the Ladas and Volkswagen bugs, but we won't go into those here. Finally, there is that huge category that I have left out - the Japanese market - and the **Atari ST**. Remember a few years back when the Japanese market was small and their cars were called toys. Well, a Honda Accord and Prelude, the new Mazda sports and Toyotas, the **520 ST** and the **1040ST** - they are not toys. Rather, they are advanced technology at a good price, fun to use, light on gas and software, and keep running for years.

BI PRODUCTS AND INTEGRATION

We have carefully selected a line of products that we feel are what is needed for the ST at this stage. We have chosen to provide integration at the logical-functional level. In other words, what makes sense being together. Our word processor has a built-in spelling checker, an idea processor and

integrates DEGAS graphics. Our graphics and statistic package outputs files for input to DEGAS. CONTACT, our terminal emulation product, will save screens in DEGAS format.

We have realized the need to correctly price position our products. We identified one main factors in price: Value for money. This has also alleviated much of the piracy problem. A person will pay for a product that has worth to them.

Talking about piracy, let me just say a few words. The piracy problem has been spoken about in depth. The piracy problem, on the other hand is serious. If one thing is to stop decent software from being developed, it is piracy. Piracy hurts us badly, and it hurts you. Without it, prices would be lower, companies would have more time and money for R&D, and we would all gain. We no longer copy protect any of our ST software - it is just not worth it. We do fight piracy and go after any bulletin boards and pirates that we find out about. It is not a simple problem, but let me just say that if it is not resolved, a lot of good software companies are going to disappear. Let me repeat me analogy that I made on Compuserve: *If you could "clone" your next door neighbour's Porsche by typing into a machine "COPY PORSCHE FROM DRIVE B TO DRIVE A", and you knew that you could not really be caught, and you knew that your clone would be as good as the original, would you?* If we presume that there would then be a lot of Porsche's on the road, what would happen to the Porsche car company? The piracy problem effects all of us. On the positive side, user groups like this help the problem; there are a lot of honest people out there; software that is well priced, has a useful users manual, a decent upgrade policy will not have a serious piracy problem. Finally, let me say a word about doing products well and doing them properly. In the last year, we announced a lot of products that should have been shipping by now. IF WE WANTED TO, WE COULD HAVE SHIPPED THEM ALL BY NOW. But, they were just not good enough in their current form. We have learned from our mistakes and the mistakes of others, and we will not release products that are not the best possible. I apologize if we have misled anyone by prematurely announcing products - this will not happen again. We are determined to give all of our products the "Batteries Treatment" - for those of you not aware of what this treatment is - quite simply it means making sure that any of our products out there must be the best possible stuff we know how to do, or we will not do it. We try and listen - and we understand the following to be what is said to us - You do not want us to ship a new product every week or every month - what you do want is a commitment that the products that we do make are the best there is - and that they remain that way through proper and reliable updates and upgrades, and a decent customer support setup. For this reason, do not be surprised if you see some new interesting products coming from us - we are a major player in this industry, and we intend remaining that way with products that are different from most - that difference allows our products to have life spans as long as the machines themselves. In future, we will announce products no longer than 30 days before they ship, and we will not ship any products that are not of the standard we expect.

If there are any questions, I would be happy to answer them. Thank you.

Classified

Small items such as ads on articles wanted or for sale, questions, problems, tips, or other brief messages will be placed in this section free of charge to NCAUG members.

FOR SALE COMREX CR222AT 8 bit Atari direct connect dot matrix printer. $100
Pat Quinn 830-0578

MAGAZINES FOR SALE: Antic, Analog, and Computer Gaming World, all three right from 1st issue produced. Also have many Softside magazines and Compute magazines.

FOR SALE: Large selection of 8 bit disks, software, disk holders, and books on 8 bit Atari systems.

Bob Thompson 836-5399

WANTED: 1 Working printer interface for XE computer.

Roger Ludman 737-7658

One MEG for your 520

One meg upgrade for *any* 520ST! No piggy backing. Second 512K of RAM installed *inside* your 520 on a discrete board. $225.....Don Krentz.....829-6366.

Gaming SIG Talk

So here we are once again approaching the gift giving season, but in my mind it can prove to be the season to dread. This is due to the fact that people, with the best intentions in mind, who know absolutely nothing about computers figure that the best thing to get for you is a piece of software. Of course this decision of theirs has two built in deadly pitfalls. The first being that to them all computers are alike therefore all software works on all computers. This problem can be easily overcome if they happen to have a VCR. You can show them that the differences between VHS and BETA applies to ATARI and IBM.

The second pitfall is the more serious of the two. Namely getting the gift giver to buy a quality program for you the gift giver. So I have put together the following list of games to aid in your quest. All you have to do is either a) leave this magazine lying around the house open to this page or b) the above with those titles that grab your fancy highlighted in fluorescent ink or c) both of the above with photocopies of this article placed in strategic places (ie cookie tin, freezer, shower, your wallet).

FOR THE STRATEGIC MINDED

F-15 STRIKE EAGLE from Microprose Software. This is the best combat flight simulator that puts you in the cockpit of one of the hottest fighters around complete with heads up display, radar, ECM, and multiple weapons system. (XE)

COLONIAL CONQUEST from SSI. This game should keep those intent on world conquest occupied as they play against up to five opponents, human, computer or a combination of both. The game really shines with six human players making treaties, deals, and back stabbing each other. (XE)

SILENT SERVICE from Microprose. While this company is known mainly for its air simulations this game is their first naval simulation, and is a winner. Silent Service puts you in command of a U.S submarine during WW II patrolling the South Pacific. While the individual scenarios are good this game is at its best when you head out on a wartime patrol. (XE/ST)

COMMAND SERIES from Microprose. Consists of four titles, Nato Commander, Crusade in Europe, Decision in the Desert, and Conflict in Vietnam, that while using the same mechanics, and the use of real-time, are unique in their own ways. Nato Commander takes place in modern day Europe pitting Nato against the Warsaw Pact. Crusade in Europe covers action from the invasion of Normandy all the way to Battle of the Bulge. Decision in the Desert covers the North African campaign of Rommel and Montgomery. And Conflict in Vietnam is perhaps not only the best game on the Vietnam war, but is the best of the Series. (XE)

STIMULATING SIMULATIONS

ULTIMA III and IV from Origin Systems. Are both computerized fantasy role-playing games with great graphics, and puzzle solving that will keep the "Dungeons & Dragons" fan happy for many hours. There are lots of imitations available, but nothing is as good as either of these two games. Ultima III (XE/ST) IV (XE)

THE HALLEY PROJECT from Mindscape Inc. A good simulation that takes you on a journey of our solar system, that teaches at the same time, as you complete missions for the secret organization PLANET. (XE)

M.U.L.E from Electronic Arts. A great game for the whole family to play as you attempt to settle a far flung planet using a cantankerous machine called MULE, and then sell what you build to make a profit. Can be called an introduction to economics 1.1. To play this game at its fullest requires a 400/800 with four joystick ports. (XE)

KENNEDY APPROACH from Microprose. Perhaps the most underrated program when it is the best air traffic controller simulation around. Try to handle varying levels of realism and airports to work out of. A real palm sweater. (XE)

THE SEVEN CITIES OF GOLD from Electronic Arts, by the same team who did M.U.L.E. This one is for the explorer in all of us. Sail in search of the new world, and discover its many wonders. Trade with the natives, establish missions, and in the process try to get yourself named the greatest explorer ever. (XE)

LET'S PLAY BALL !!!

ONE-ON-ONE from Electronic Arts. You've seen Julius Erving and Larry Bird in action now you can become one of the two best basketball players, and try your hand against the computer or another human in a friendly(?) game of one-on-one. Great graphics with lots of action. This game will only run on the 400/800/XL.

LEADER BOARD from Access Software. If you have an ST then do not pass up this excellent golf simulator. XE owners may be better off if they buy an ST to play this game rather than the XE version of this game (see review else where in this issue). (XE/ST)

MICROLEAGUE SPORTS ASSOCIATION. Besides giving us Microleague Baseball which combines fine graphics with true statistics to satisfy baseball purists. Players perform based upon their statistics with you as manager giving the signs, and choosing when to get the bull pen going. This company has made available a line of complimentary utilities like the Player Stats/Team Disk for the past season, Box Score/Stats Compiler that keeps track of players statistics affected by your managing skills. Plus the General Managers utility that allows you to draft your own team. (XE/ST coming)

HARDBALL from Accolade. Combines player statistics and arcade action for a unique game. While players are not based on any real teams, players do perform based on their statistics. While you control them via a joystick from a player swinging at a pitch to diving for line drives. (XE)

JOYSTICK MADNESS

STAR RAIDERS from Atari. Until Star Raiders II (XE/ST) arrives this is "the" classic game. (XE)

KARATEKA from Boderbund. A movie like karate game for Kung Fu fans. That gets harder as you seek to rescue the kidnapped princess, but it can be done. (XE)

LODE RUNNER from Broderbund Software. Steal back the stolen gold from the Bungeling Empire as you attempt to stay one step ahead of the guards, while solving the puzzles built into each screen. Make your own screens when you tire of the 150 built in screens. (XE)

TIME BANDITS by Michtron. The best reason for buying an ST, besides logical ones. Or why god created the microchip. (ST)

BALLBLAZER from Lucasfilm Games. Try your hand at the galaxies most exciting professional sport. Play against nine level of droids or a human opponent in this fast action, split screen game. (XE)

KRONIS RIFT from Lucasfilm Games. Follows in the steps of Ball Blazer, and surpasses the first game in both graphics and complexity. Kronis Rift lets you become a Han Solo type raiding derelict ships in the fabled Kronis Rift. (XE)

While you plan your strategy for getting some of the mentioned programs I present my Second Annual Christmas Wish List of things I would like to see happen by next Christmas.

1. Last year I wished for a 128K Ultima game. While I got that wish I am modifying this wish to the following. Manufacturers that use others systems memory to the fullest start doing the same for Atari's.

2. Electronic Arts makes good on its promise, published in the April 86 issue of Antic, of converting programs over to Atari XE.

3. ST users stop looking at XE users the way a dog looks at a flea.

4. I want everyone of Microproses' Command Series ported over to the ST. Then I will have one less excuse not to buy one.

5. Programs have the built in ability to disable Basic on XL/XE systems.

6. XE owners start realizing that piracy is one of the reasons that manufacturers are not supporting us.

7. A separate keyboard from the CPU so I can slouch in my chair instead of hovering over the keyboard.

8. Someone else writes one XE article per issue.

So until the next issue, when I will present my Second Annual Bricks and Bouquets article, here is to successful gaming and a happy holiday season.

Keith Burnage

LORDS OF CONQUEST

In the November/December '85 issue I reviewed SSI's Colonial Conquest, and I stated that "any other game of this type will have to measure itself against Colonial Conquest." Well Lords of Conquest has arrived to provide the competition and I can say one of two things; compared to SSI's Colonial Conquest it is both a hit and a miss, and this game can aptly be nicknamed The Good, The Bad and The Ugly II.

But first a description of what I am talking about. Lords of Conquest comes from Eon Software Inc, and is distributed by Electronic Arts. The game is an electronic version of Parker Brother's boardgame Risk for one to four human players. Like Risk it is an Introductory level game whereas Colonial Conquest is an Intermediate level game. What is required in this game is to build a set number of cities to win while defending your territories, and attacking your opponent to stop him from winning. Lords of Conquest is made up of two features, the game and the Map Maker.

THE GOOD

While this game is less complex than Colonial Conquest it does have features that make it better than the competition. The obvious difference is that territories in Colonial Conquest have a monetary value attached to them that affect how much money is in your treasury. Which dictates the number of troops and ships you can build. Lords of Conquest, depending which of the four levels you play at, uses a system of natural resources, gold, horses, coal, iron, and timber, that affect what you can build. A touch more realistic, but unfortunately the game does not place the resources where they are found in the real word (ie timber in Greenland), but randomly. However you have the option to repostion resources to where they really are if you want to play a historically accurate game.

This games other good aspect is that you can define the area of the world you want to play in rather than the whole world as in Colonial Conquest. Lords of Conquest has twenty built in maps to select ranging from feudal Japan, Prussia, U.S Civil War, to the present Central American conflict.

Should there not be a map for a particular area you can create your own maps using the Map Maker option which is simple to use. All you need is a joystick, a blank disk to save to, and a real map to work from our your own imagination. To start making a map you define a New Area on the blank screen. You can have at least twenty to a maximum of forty-eight areas on any one map. A small drawback to defining an area is that each must be made up of a minimum of nine cells for the program to accept that area as a part of the map. The Map Maker does have the ability to allow you to save an unfinished mapped (called a Work), and once you have finished it can then be saved to a blank disk.

The other positive thing about Lords of Conquest is that is has a second Map Maker found in the Map Selection menu that will have the program generate a random map if you are not in the creative mood. The Generate Map option will create the map according to two options, pre-programmed or player set settings. Should you not like the map created you can have the program generate another map using the same or different settings.

The Generate Map option does have one limitation over the Map Maker which is that you cannot edit a random map directly. First you have to save the random map, exit to the main menu, select the Map Maker option, load the saved map, and then start editing. A time consuming process to say the least.

Perhaps the nicest feature is that this game is easy to learn and play. Only those options you can do are presented on screen for each phase. In the Conquest phase you are told wether you have the numerical advantage to seize a territory (the chance of winning is also dependent upon the level of Chance you picked to play at). It does this by showing Attack, if you can win, Add Forces, if you need additional aid to win, or Lose, if you have no chance at all. Should you be playing with more than two human opponents the game will present the option Allies if another player borders the territory you are attacking. That player can ally with either side, which will affect that sides strength, or stay neutral.

This is one feature that would enhance play in Colonial Conquest since an openly declared ally will affect the chances of the side they are on. Although if you cannot Add Forces to continue an attack you will have to find the means of persuading that side to ally with you.

Just as in Colonial Conquest this game also relies on player interaction. This takes place in two areas, the previously mentioned Conquest phase, and in the Trading option. This option while similar to the one in Colonial Conquest is different an a bit more involved. Whereas in Colonial Conquest you trade money, Lords of Conquest, when played at higher levels, requires you to become a good negotiator and a long term planner as you try to put together a package of resources that will get you what you want. The addition of bargaining with five resources makes trading more exciting as you seek to gain the better of the give and take.

THE BAD

As the saying goes, "All good things must come to pass", and so it does in this game. Perhaps the one thing that I did not like is the limited size of the map. There is no scrolling to allow for more detailed and larger maps. Attempting to create a detailed map of the U.S, South America, Africa, or the world is impossible. This is due to this game using one screen for all maps unlike Colonial Conquest which uses eight screens. While you can portray smaller areas one one screen, Europe is presented well, attempting anything bigger suffers from too much comprimise.

The Conquest phase also has a bad side that sees the loss of any horse, weapon or boat that was in an attacking force that was defeated. Rather than eliminating all of these additional forces it would be better if the game had a function, akin to Colonial Conquest's, of randomly determining if any or all of these forces were lost. This is more realistic since an attacking force that loses a battle does not always get wiped out. The other down side is that while an attacker can Add Forces, the defender is not given the same option. This cuts back on the fairness of letting a defender use additional forces to protect vital territories.

THE UGLY

Now I have seen bugs in other programs. but I cannot recall one as bad as the one in this game. While you are supposed to be able to save up to twenty maps to a personal disk the only thing you do save are the twenty file names, and the last map you stored. This is because the save function stores all personal maps to the same sector on the disk. I cannot believe this bug could have gotten by without being detected by someone at Eon. So this bug renders this games Map Maker feature useless. Although you could save each personal map to a separate blank disk.

LORDS VS COLONIAL CONQUEST

So how do these two similar games stack up to each other? Well Lords has features missing from Colonial, and Lords is missing features that Colonial has. I prefer Colonial over Lords, but if these two games could be merged you would have a "the game".

1. Lords multiple resources are better than the straight monetary value used in Colonial.
2. Colonial can be played with one human and five computer players, any combination, or six human players. Lords does not allow for the computer to play in anything but solitaire game.
3. The Map Maker feature in Lords does not even exist in Colonial, but since the save feature is useless the point is moot until rectified.
4. A scrolling map is called for in both games. However Colonial is the only one to have this feature.

It should be remembered that Lords is an Introductory game, while Colonial is an Intermediate game, and as an Introductory game it does its job well. This game is an excellent way to let children, young and old, find out if historical type simulations appeal to them. But you may want to wait until the Map Maker works as claimed, and it is too bad that such a glaring error detracts from an otherwise good game.

LORDS OF CONQUEST
from Eon Software Inc.
for the 400/800/XL/XE
$44.95 Canadian

reviewed by Keith Burnage

LEADER BOARD

The sun beats down on my shoulders as I line up my second shot. Let me see, 112 yards from the hole with the wind blowing briskly from left to right. Hmmm, better use a nine iron. Stepping up to the ball I push aside the fact that I am one shot behind the leader, and on the last hole of this seventy-two hole tournament. Not a sound comes from the gallery as I make my swing, but as I drive down on the ball the cat jumps into my lap. While I watch with dismay as my shot slices wildly off to the right to splash in the water, and my chances of winning go in the drink too. Now if I only had a real club in my hands to throttle that mangy beast.

Such is ones fate when playing Leader Board from Access Software for either the XE or ST. If you have not guessed by now, Leader Board is a golf simulation for one to four players that while a hole in one for the ST system it maintains par for the XE.

GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION

The most noticeable difference between the two systems is the graphics. Leader Board does present the graphics in a realistic way for both systems. In the form of an as the course is seen perspective with an animated golfer representing you, and the course lain out before you. A nice aspect of the graphics for the XE is how quickly it redraws the perspective for each player, as for the ST anything the XE can do it can do faster and more detailed. This game does not use a generic view for all the players, but redraws the view for each player depending on how far that player is from the hole. Also the program shows the player in motion, and the flight of the ball as well as the balls shadow on the ground. Some very nice touches that help add a feeling of realism. But aside from the graphics the game is very similar for both systems.

COPY PROTECTION

The first similarity is that both systems share the same form of copy protection. The actual game disk can be copied as many times as you want, but to play the game you must plug the security key into joystick port 2. A interesting solution for those who prefer to use a backup copy rather than the original.

HANDICAPPING THE PLAYERS

The designers of this game have a unique solution for those whose only golfing experience has been with miniature golf. After selecting the number of people who will be playing and inputing their names, the program asks which of the three Ability Levels each person will play at. The Novice level is as far from reality as one can get. In this level the shot is not affected by the velocity or direction of the wind or wether you snap the ball too soon or too late. The Amateur level brings the Snap factor into play, and the Professional level puts you in the real world. This three level system is a good idea for handicapping players of widely differing skills, and also gives the game the much needed ability to grow with the player as their skills increase.

THE DRIVING RANGE

One does not have to take to the course to develop the skill to move up in levels. The game has a built in driving range that allows you to whack at a bucket of balls with the program marking where each ball landed, and the distance travelled. This feature also gives you an idea of the distance a ball will travel using a specific club and power in the swing. However you cannot pick the level you will practice at. Instead you are automatically put at the Professional level. This does not help the person seeking to go from the Novice to Amateur level. Also there is no way to practice your putting skills which, in this game, are just as important as learning how to perfect a tee shot.

THE MANUAL

The manual has one vital piece of information that will affect all of your shots, besides how to make one. This help is in the form of a chart that lists all of the clubs in the game, and the shortest and longest yardage each club will give. And Leader Board is one of the few golf games I have come across that does not assume that you know the difference between a wood and an iron, and what situations you would use them in. With this chart in hand the only problem you have when making a shot is how much power you will put into your swing.

FORE!!

Making a shot is the exact same for either the ST or XE. Except that the XE uses a joystick. While the ST uses the mouse with the left button use to pick the general direction you want the shot to go, and the right button to make a shot. Shots are made using the Power/Snap Indicator on the screen. In the Novice level the only part of this indicator to pay attention too is the Power section. When you press your button a bar rises in this section, and when it reaches the level of power, on the backswing, you want to use, release the button, and the power of your swing is set. The bottom of the indicator is zero power, and the top is maximum power. The only disadvantage with this indicator is that it is so small that it is hard to tell the difference between fifty and seventy-five percent of full power.

On the other levels the snap indicator comes into play after you have set the power level. Snapping the ball affects wether the ball will fly true. The Snap Indicator has a mark half way down to indicate a correct snap, straight. If you snap the ball before this mark you will hook the ball sending it left of true, or after causing the ball to slice sending the ball right. Learning how to judge ones power and snap is what makes this game feel like the real thing.

SINK THAT PUTT

This feeling of realism continues right up to putting the ball. Putting comes into effect once the ball is within sixty-four feet of the hole. The game uses the same type of indicator for showing the wind direction and velocity except on the green what is shown is the amount of slope, and the direction the slope is in respect to you. If the indicator is pointing towards you then you will be putting uphill, and if it is also to the left or right of you this tells if the green breaks left or right. There is also a modified Power Indicator when putting that is graded in eight foot increments. This makes it easier to judge how much power to use corresponding with how far from the hole you are, and wether you are putting up or downhill. The way Leader Board takes into account all the things that affect a shot or putt gives it realistic feel.

THE COURSES

While both the XE and ST share much in common. It is the actual courses in each version that the most glaring difference becomes apparent. The courses in the ST version have everything on them from fairway, rough, bunkers, and trees. In short fantastic!

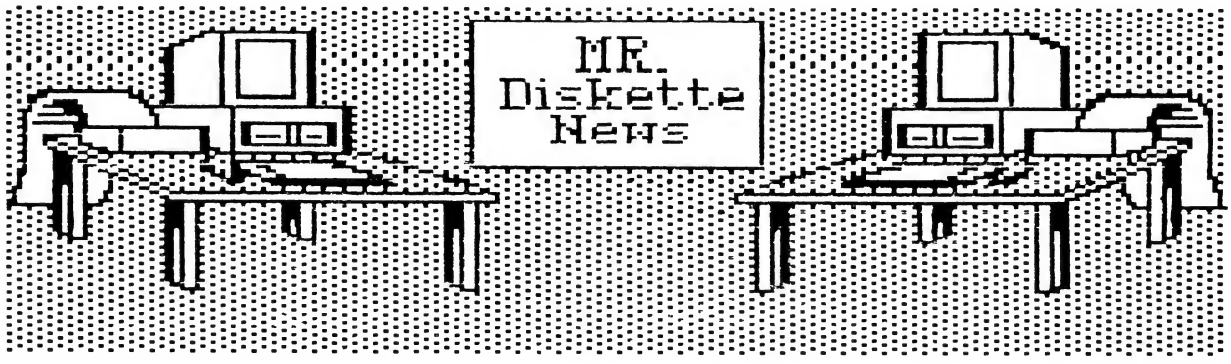
For the XE version it is a different story. While the mechanics of the game of golf are true to the real thing the actual courses would never be seen on the PGA tour. When I think of golf, other than the skill of the players, it is the course that can make or break a player. The reason being the various obstacles found on each and every hole. In the XE version all of the courses are comprised of islands surrounded by water. Unfortunately the land portion of each hole is made up of nothing but fairway, and a green. There are no trees, no rough, and no bunkers. The mechanics are set up so you can handle any challenge, but where is the challenge of playing on a course that is as exciting as a Gidget movie.

While the courses for the ST version just add to the realism and excellence of this game. For the XE the game takes a sharp downward plunge. Realistic courses are what give the game of golf its thrill and challenge. Not learning how to hit a perfect shot, but how to make the perfect shot against the difficulties each hole throws at you. This negative aspect for the XE version spoils an otherwise well done game.

Leader Board while almost identical for both systems gets two different recommendations. For the ST this is a game not to be missed by either the novice or pro golfer. The XE version however comes across as a half finished program due to the very poor courses included. Which does more damage for this otherwise excellent game for the XE. Perhaps it should have been released as a 64K game to solve this problem. And while the ST users will be making holes in one, XE users will find they are stuck in the water hazard.

LEADER BOARD
from Access Software
for the 400/800/XL/XE/ST
XE $49.95/ST $54.95 Canadian

reviewed by Keith Burnage



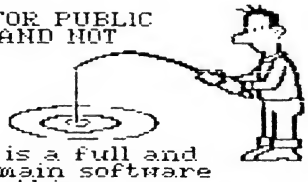
"NEWS BULLETIN"

For all you Atari ST owners who have friends without ST's, tell them the news. We are offering only till Christmas a special. For every Atari 520 or 1040 bought we are giving, yes giving, $300 worth of free software rental to the proud new owners. Also, to the existing owners, if you bring someone in and they purchase a system we will give you $100 worth of free rental. But like I said it's only till Christmas.

Catch It Quick Before It's Gone.

From November 24 to December 1 we at Mr Diskette are having a software sale on selected titles for the Atari ST. Which will include everything from games to application software at a slash of up to 40% off. Also all titles for the 130 XE will be on, reduced to clear.

TIRED OF FISHING FOR PUBLIC DOMAIN SOFTWARE AND NOT REALLY GETTING ANYWHERE... Well Search no More!!!



Coming soon to us is a full and complete public domain software library with everything new (and old) thats out there in the ST freeware land. It will include everything from games to tutorials on professional Gem programming. I think it will be something worth checking out.

"HEAR YE, HEAR YE"

Looking for a computer for the children? Well do we have an offer for you. The Atari 130XE computer and the 1050 disk drive with Dos 2.5 is selling at a mere $450.00. 128K memory storage and a double density drive connects to any TV set for easy setup and use.

"DISKETTE MADNESS"

BULK 3.5" MICRO'S

$1.99

STuff

Not much news this month - I'll leave most of it for the COMDEX report elsewhere in this issue. A number of people known to the club were there: Joe Kuffner and Joe Waters of the Washington group were pushing Current Notes (and getting news), Jack Tay was showing his just-released Inagem Agenda+, and Dave Melamed of G Plus was debuting ST User, the British magazine, soon to be published by G Plus in Ottawa.

The Canadian Computer Show

Bob Thompson, Ted McNichol, Don Krentz, Terry Web and I attended the Canadian Computer Show, which ran November 17-20 in Toronto. The trip was a travelling zoo, but there was plenty for us Atari fanatics. Showing at the Atari booth were:

Music: in one corner of the booth, Steve's Music (Toronto) had set up a complete MIDI setup, with more keyboards and toys than I could count. I was particularly impressed by two pieces of software: Hybrid Arts' CZ-Android (a patch editor/generator for the ST) and Steinburg's Pro-24, a very professional looking 24-track sequencer.

Flight Simulator II: the closest that Atari would come to entertainment software (remember; this show is strictly business) was Sublogic's new Flight Simulator II. Imagine 3-D graphics, flying a Cessna, a Learjet, or a WWI flighter, and the ability to play against another player on another ST. Although this program has been available in Ottawa for about a week, you'll be lucky if you can buy one before Christmas. We'll have a complete review early in the new year.

InfoNet: there were two ST's and an IBM PC linked together in a network by BMB Compuscience's InfoNet.

WIP: Mark Skapinker was there, representing his new company Schmatix, and showing a beta version of Work in Progress (this was orginally going to be released by Batteries Included as Time and Billing).

The Blitter Chip: Atari had a 1040 with the new blitter chip installed, running Degas Elite. What a difference it makes, especially with block functions!

Microsoft Write: in another corner, Atari had a 1040 hooked up to a laser printer, running Microsoft Write. This one looks like it needs work before it'll be ready to sell.

Publishing Partner: in yet another corner sat a 1040 hooked up to an Apple LaserWriter, running Softlogik's new page design program, Publishing Partner.

VIP Professional GEM version: yes, it does exist, the GEM version of VIP Professional. I hate to admit it, but it looks good. (Now if they'd just start shipping it!)

All of the software at the booth paled in comparsion to what Barry Pusitz had to show us upstairs: the new STi! With a detached keyboard, the computer itself is a box about the size of the present monitor (and about 3" deep) with a built-in double-sided drive. Stacked below the CPU was the new hard drive (both are the same size). Apparently both boxes have room for additional components, which suggests tape streaming backup for the hard drive and slots for the CPU. Look for it in 2 and 4 meg configurations in 1987.

NEWS FROM ATARI

Joe Ferrari of Atari Canada has confirmed that they have a new monitor with a built-in single-sided disk drive at CSA for testing. The monitor will be available in mono or colour, for about the same price as a monitor plus a drive. In my opinion, Atari will make a mistake if they don't offer it with a double-sided drive: those who want portability have already bought 1040's. [Note: this drive, named the SC3000, was shown at the show by Electronic Playworld, and is available now from G Plus). By the way, Joe has also promised that he and Ian Goodwin (the Atari rep for Ottawa) will attend our combined meeting December 9th.

NEW SOFTWARE

There's lots of new software on the dealers' shelves, and lots more will be on the way after COMDEX:

Arena
- this is one of two new programs by Psygnosis Software (Brataccus): a sports game with great graphics, although it looks like it may be tough on your keyboard.

Basketball
- a new 2 on 2 version of the game by GameStar.

Championship Wresting
- for those of us who love to watch Hulk Hogan and company beat each other up, this one's a winner!

Deep Space
- this is the other new one by Psygnosis: a game that looks like Star Raiders should have, although it's a bit hard to catch on to the controls.

Flight Simulator II
- see my comments above.

K-Switch
- this program is one of the ones I've been waiting for: it will split the memory in your 1040 into distinct areas, allowing two desktops and programs to run at the same time (shades of Amiga!).

Moonmist
- a new introductory level text adventure from Infocom.

Shanghai
- a parlor game from Activision based on the Chinese tile game Mah Jong. This is one game that I've been able to compare with it's Amiga counterpart, and I'll warn you: don't: the Amiga version is much better.

Skyfox
- the first game release from Electronic Arts is a very good arcade game (although I hate to admit it, I'm addicted).

Super Cycle
- a motorcycle race game from Epyx, reminiscent of Pole Position.

REVIEWERS

The club needs more people to review software. If you're interested, check with Bob to see what to do, but remember, you'll be responsible for obtaining whatever software you want to do. Remember, you can always review what you have, or rent from one of the dealers in town who rent. Remember: the software manufacturers are starting to send us review software. This software will only be given to those who are writing on a continual basis, with preference given to those actively working for the club (there has to be some advantage!).

CLUB Review Policies

The following is from the letter I have been sending to software manufacturers to solicit review software. It states the club policies relating to the review of software:

- we are an anti-pirate group: we don't condone piracy, we don't allow copying or exchange of other than legitimate public domain software at our meetings and we don't allow demonstration of anything but original software.
- we believe that a reviewer should give the benefit of the doubt to the manufacturer. For this reason, we pay for any telephone calls that a reviewer needs to make to the manufacturer to clear up problems, etc.
- our group *buys* software: in a city of 300,000 plus, we now have 11 Atari dealers.
- we believe in putting our money where our mouths are: if the club uses software (databases, etc.) for club business, then the club purchases that software. oevery manufacturer providing review software is sent a copy of the issue reviewing its software, and given an opportunity to rebut any negative comments (we haven't had to yet, but we will gladly print any and all rebuttals).
- the real advantage to the user of a review in a club newsletter is to read an article unbiased by advertising considerations (if the program is junk, we're not afraid to say so). On the other hand, we attempt to seek out those qualified to review, and discourage negative reviews.
- we are more than happy to provide our expertise for beta testing, although we realize that piracy problems are now limiting such work (we have done beta testing for a number of companies in the past, and have had no such problem).
- we have instituted, in cooperation with a number of manufacturers, upgrade procedures (basically; when a manufacturer wishes to make an upgrade of a piece of software available, we will, if granted permission, copy the updated program onto the *original* disks of our members.)

Executive Burnout

There are a number of executive members who have been working for the club for several years (Bob Thompson, Keith Burnage, Don Krentz, and many more, including myself). With the expansion of the club brought on by the incredible success of the ST has come an exponential increase in work. It has got to the point where several of us would like to quit, so that we can go back to

playing with our computers, instead of working on them. What we need are more people who are willing to take an active role in the club, people who can take some initiative and get a job done. Speaking for myself, at the end of my term I will be severely limiting the time I spend on club matters (I now spend about 30 hours per week). My plan is to take over as ST Editor of the newsletter, and leave the running of the club to the new executive, whoever they may be. I am not the only one in this circumstance: without new blood, the NCAUG will likely follow TAPS into oblivion.

Think about it.

Glenn Brown

THE CANADIAN COMPUTER SHOW

Toronto , November 17-20,1986

For a number of Club members, computers are no longer a hobby but are almost an obsession and when the chance came for several of us to get the use of a van so that we could attend the Toronto show it was too good to pass up. This show, while not in the same league as Comdex in the States, is head and shoulders above anything else held in Canada. The site this year was at the International Centre near the airport and the almost 700 exhibitors took up all 5 buildings available. The show was so big that a full day was not enough to see it all but certainly afforded time to get a good look at the booths of interest.

The show is not consumer oriented but slanted towards business applications and the industry. Not only were all major hardware manufacturers represented but also the larger software houses such as Lotus and Microsoft as well as a number of suppliers of peripherals and accessories.

As I think back over the show, there are a number of overall impressions that I came home with. Almost every disk manufacturer (and everyone is getting into the business) is now featuring 3 1/2 inch disks. The industry is no longer dominated by IBM and even the software houses were using other machines to demo their products. There is a whole generation of dot matrix printers coming out that feature excellent colour definition, beautiful graphics and as close to letter quality printing as I have seen. Lastly, almost every new program and system features some sort of graphics interface and the days of the command line interpreter are numbered.

As interesting as all this was, one of the main reasons we all went down was to see what was new with Atari. Because this was a business and industry show, I wasn't sure how the machines would be presented but I have to admit that I was pleasently surprised. The booth was large and situated in the centre of building 5 with a big sign on top and eight machines set up on the outer counters. The software was chosen to be of interest to the people attending and included an unfinished Microsoft Write, GEM version VIP, Publishing Partner desktop publishing system with a laser printer, midi demonstration and Degas Elite on a 1040 with the blitter chip. The blitter really does exist and once you've seen it you'll have to have it.

There is no doubt that Atari is trying hard to shed their image as a game machine and a show such as this one will go a long way toward that end because of the use of productivity type software which was of above average quality. The conversations that I had with people and the hardware that I saw (including the new STi) lead me to believe that the changes in the Atari line for the next while will be mostly in the plastics. I think the 520 with its separate components will be switched into the existing 1040 case so that it will have internal power supplies and single sided drive while the 1040 will go into the new STi cases and feature a separate keyboard. The hard drive will go into the STi plastics so that it will sit under any monitor and we will probably see a 2 meg machine which will be a variation of the 1040. The 520 as we know it will be sold only in the mass merchandizing market in the States.

The only disadvantage with a trip like this was that we had to return home the same night and that made for a long day. That's the only excuse I can think of for some of us acting like pigs on the trip back while the rest stopped at every Tim Horton Donut Shop between here and Toronto.

Terry Webb

LAWS OF COMPUTING

When you get to the point where you really understand your computer system, it's probably obsolete.

As soon as you find that your microcomputer is easy to use, add some peripherals you don't understand how to operate.

The British Connection....STUser Magazine

Reviewed by Bob Thompson

Last month a new magazine appeared in Ottawa. I was fortunate enough to be able to purchase issue number 8, and since then I have been able to borrow a copy of issue number 7. The magazine, called 'STuser' is published in the United Kingdom by a seventeen year old.

Both issues have 68 pages of contents plus covers. This magazine is no overgrown newsletter; it is a slick professional publication. Besides having full colour covers it even has some full colour pages inside. STuser retails for $4.95 Canadian. Antic, Analog, Compute's ST, ST Applications, and STart will have some real competition with this one.

We have all heard how well the ST computers are selling in europe; and this magazine is our first chance to be exposed to the european market. The entire magazine has a different approach than the U.S. publications that we are bombarded with. This magazine is not overly technical; yet it doesn't insult your intelligence with shallow reviews and hype. The two issues that I've seen are filled with lots of news about firms and products that we have not seen, or even heard of yet.

There is a definite foreign feeling about the magazine (in a charming sort of manner). The British ads include everything from major manufacturers to the computer shop next door. It's funny to read about a firm called 'Microdeal Electronics' publishing a line of products that we know to be produced by MichTron. Some of the terminology seems a bit strange, (including the 520STM and the 1040STF), and all of the prices are in British pounds.

Perhaps a listing of the contents of the two issues that I have seen will convince you that this is a major publication worth buying.

Issue #7 has:
articles on MIDI, a spelling checker survey, and a preview of the PCW (Personal Computing World) show;
reviews of Cards, Major Motion, Cornerman, STAccounts, DB Calc, and 1st Word Plus;
regular columns such as GEM and the BASIC programmer, inside GEMDOS, Programming the 68000, Company profile (GST), and an excellent problems page.

Issue #8 has:
articles on creating printer drivers, and exceptional coverage of the 1986 Personal Computer World Show (which includes the showing of the 2080STF 2 meg computer with a built in 1 meg driver and the 4160STF 4 meg computer);
reviews of Fast Basic, Little Computer People, Time Link, Music Studio, and the Haba video digitizer;
regular columns as the previous issue including a company profile on Metacoma.

If you haven't seen STuser yet, rush out and buy one. I'm sure you'll agree that this magazine is a real winner. I can't wait for the North American version. STuser is now available at many retail outlets. The November issue (#9) should be available by the time you read this. (See the article on the next page for more on the inside story of STuser.)

The Canadian Connection

....STUser Magazine

by Bob Thompson

The biggest news about STuser is that a Canadian company, G-PLUS of Ottawa, has the sole North American rights to the magazine. Even more astounding is the news that soon there will be a North American version of STuser that will printed right here in Ottawa.

In an interview with Ross Graham of G-PLUS I was able to get the background information about this remarkable project. The people at G-PLUS saw the potential of STuser. They felt that the magazine reflected the right image of how ST owners feel about their computers. They also realized the potential problems of the strictly British advertising. The solution was straight foreward. They would market the British version of STuser until they could begin production of their own North American version.

Issue number 7 was flown over from England and was distributed to North American retailers to get a feel for the market. The October issue (#8) was carried in the G-PLUS and other retail outlets. The response was overwhelming, with many retailers placing repeat orders after having sold out. The November and December issues will also be flown over from England for North American distribution. From now on all references to prices in the magazine will be both English pounds and U.S. dollars.

The Official release of the North American version of STuser will be made at the CES show in California 8-11 January. The North American edition will be printed here in Ottawa for the January release. It is estimated that there will be 15,000 copies circulated of the January North American edition. The North American edition will have the same contents, same paper stock, and same quality of the British edition; but will have North American advertising, and more colour. Gollner Publishing Ltd., the publishers of STuser, will be completing their January edition early to ensure that the printers film is received in Ottawa in time to produce the North American edition for the CES release.

Introductory subscription rates of $48.00 for 1 year, or $84.00 for 2 years are being offered. Back issues will be made available to subscribers as a service.

I wish G-PLUS the best of luck in this ambitious undertaking.

LAWS OF COMPUTING

Whatever happens behave like you meant it to happen.

Experience is something you don't get until just after you needed it most.

The time it takes to fix the error in your spreadsheet is inversely proportional to the time it took to do the damage in the first place.

MY EVIL COMPUTER

A computer is a truly evil device,
as any wife will tell,
And if you would take her advice
it would go straight to hell.

"The computer takes up all your time
and produces naught of value
I doubt you'll ever make a dime
from anything they sell you.

Your programs make no sense to me
I don't know why you bother
Playing games is an offense you see
I'm going home to mother"

But I'll just sit here on my throne
and visit far-out lands,
With a computer you'll never be alone
with idle mind and hands.

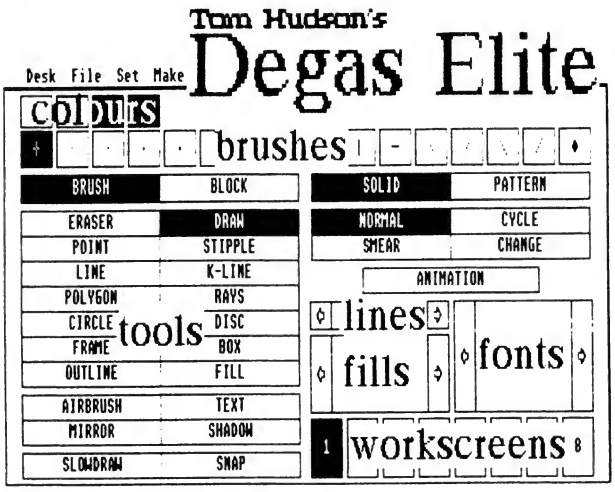
OTTAWA'S LARGEST SELECTION

OF COMPUTER BOOKS

PROSPERO COMPUTER BOOKSTORE

129 BANK STREET (CORNER SLATER)

238-7683



reviewed by Glenn Brown

Well, it's finally out, **Tom Hudson's** tour de force, the graphics program to end all: **DEGAS Elite**! Let's see if **Batteries Included** latest release lives up to its advance billing.

Features

As well as all of the features of **DEGAS** (brush, line, K-line, rays, polygon, circle, box, mirror, fill, airbrush, shadow, slowdraw, etc.), **Tom** has added quite a few toys to **DEGAS Elite**:

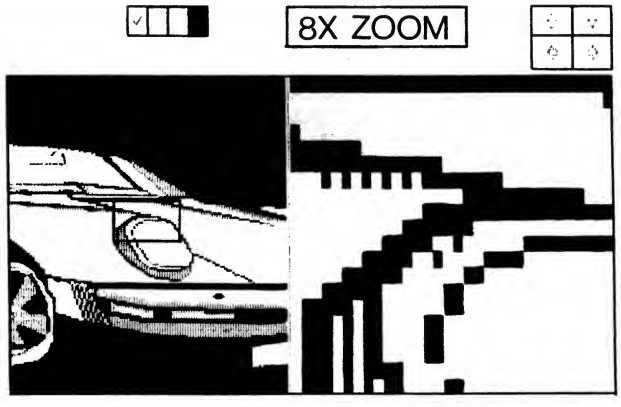
- **Animation** allows for colour cycling of four distinct colour groups within your palette, and is thus capable of simulating animation.
- **Block** allows you to mark off any area of a picture, from one pixel to the whole screen, take that block to one of seven workscreens (4 if you have a 512K ST) and flip, rotate, skew (horizontally or vertically), resize (make your picture into an icon or vice-versa), distort, or paint (using the block as a brush).
- **Change** allows you to make detail changes without messing up the rest of your work, by isolating one colour for correction work.
- **Outline** simulates anti-alaising to give your pictures a more professional look (anti-alaising is the technique of using intermediate colours to smooth the jagged edges between colours in computer-generated graphics).
- **Smear** allows the deliberate blending of adjacent colours, much in the same fashion used in charcoal drawing.
- **Snap** aligns text to an invisible grid in one of eight sizes.
- **Stipple** is best described as a brush-shaped airbrush. It is particularly effective as a multicoloured airbrush.

DEGAS Elite is the second program to use GDOS (Atari's Graphics Device Operating System, first used, albeit in a beta version, by **Migraph** for **Easy-Draw**). This allows the use of multiple resizable fonts, each which can be underlined, thickened, lightened, skewed, and/or outlined.

Ease of Use

Many of the improvements made to **DEGAS** are in the user interface: most settings can be adjusted via a drop-down or by clicking on the main menu, most can accessed via the keyboard when you're actually drawing. **DEGAS Elite** allows multiple ramdisks, and can easily be installed on a hard disk. It will load low, medium and high resolution pictures into any other resolution, automatically making allowances for colour, as well as loading **Neochrome**, 8-bit **Koalapad**, and **Amiga** (IFF) pictures.

One of the crucial areas of a computer paint program (as anyone who has tried to draw a picture with a computer will tell you) is its ability to zoom in and allow detail work. The zoom in **DEGAS Elite** is probably the best I've ever seen: from 3X to 12X magnification, with the left-hand side of the screen showing the area being worked on in full size:

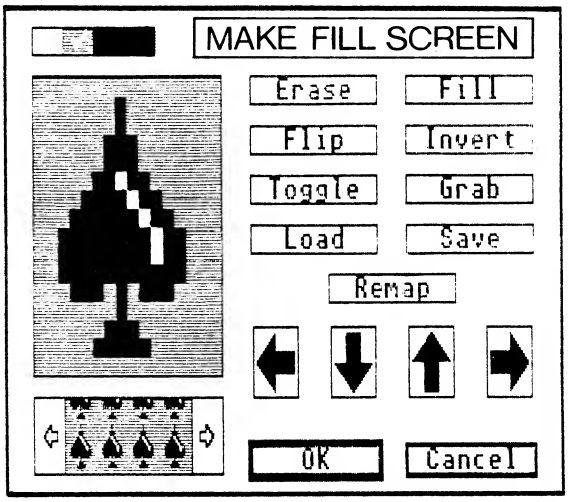


One of the unfortunate realities of the present market for all computer software is piracy. There are a number of apparently user-hostile features in **DEGAS Elite** that are there simply to make the use of a copy (without the manual) more difficult. Examples include the access to and use of the block and zoom functions, and the "help" key, which could have provided help, but instead gives a listing of the contents of the eight workscreens. Things are looking up, however, **Batteries** sold enough copies of the original **DEGAS** to supply one in three ST owners!

Drawbacks

I know this is a bit like complaining about Santa Claus, but I can still find a little room for improvement:

- I would think that a program that can support 8 workscreens could be made to do full page editing (a la N-Vision/Paintworks).
- it would be nice to be able to see the "invisible" grid used by the snap feature.
- the font editor is unchanged from DEGAS. I have to think that the first revision will have this part upgraded.
- I understand Tom bought an Amiga just to have a good look at Electronic Arts' Deluxe Paint for the Amiga, with the intent of duplicating every feature possible in DEGAS Elite. If this is true, it would be nice to have DP's ability to bend lines.
- Degas Elite is a limited GEM implementation: my first disappointment was discovering that Snapshot crashes the program.
- when you brush using a pattern, you're really revealing the pattern underneath, rather than using the pattern as a brush (stipple cures this to some degree for airbrushing).



The Bottom Line

This is it: time for the complainers to put their money where there collective mouths are: Tom Hudson and Batteries Included have produced what everyone has said they want: great software, well documented, reasonably priced, supported by a reputable company with an upgrade policy that can't be beat (you can even trade in your DEGAS for a half-priced Elite). If we as ST users want this type of software to continue to be produced, it will have to be supported in the only way that counts: *buy it!*

About the Cover

This month's cover illustration entitled 'Bridge' was created from scratch by Bob Thompson, NCAUG newsletter editor. The picture was created in 14 stages on an Atari 400 using the Koalapad graphics tablet. Recently the picture was transferred to a 3 1/2" disk using a null modem. The image was then loaded into the Degas Elite drawing program from Batteries Included. Using the features of Degas Elite the picture was recoloured from the 4 original colours to 6 shades of grey. Considerable detailing was also added to the picture on the ST as the resolution is higher. The finished low resolution picture was then printed out using the horizontal print mode of Degas Elite. A slightly reduced PMT print was made from the printout so that it fit into the area allowed by the newsletter layout. The print was then pasted up on the cover artwork and sent to the printer for the making of a plate and subsequent printing. A fully documented slide show presentation of how the original 'bridge' picture was created on the Koalapad is available on a 5 1/4" disk.

LAWS OF COMPUTING

People always remember the last mistake you made.

He who hesitates is probably smart.

The one who does the least work always gets the most credit.

The less a computer peripheral costs, the more it costs to fix.

ALI COMPUTERS

1040ST IN STOCK

WE RENT SOFTWARE - BIGGEST SELECTION FOR 8 BIT AND ST

SPECIAL SUMMER CLEARANCE ON 8 BIT SOFTWARE

DS/DD 5 1/4" DISKS PACKAGE OF 10 FOR $7.95 (WITH THIS AD)

Atari

WE SPECIALIZE IN ATARI COMPUTERS

QUALIFIED PERSONNEL READY TO SERVE YOU!

COMPUTER COURSES AVAILABLE

1158 Ogilvie Rd., Gloucester

741-4714 or 744-0220

ARC - A GEM OF A UTILITY

By Craig Tremblay

ARC, which is short for archive, is a disk utility that will not only compress files, but will also allow files that are inter-related to be compressed and combined together. In a particular application such as a Bulletin Board System, users downloading software will be saved valuable time because files are, on the average, fifty percent smaller after they have been arc'ed. Also, if a program has several support files, as does ST Writer for example, all these files can be added or combined to an archive file, and the BBS user need only download that one file instead of the fifteen plus files associated with ST Writer.

On this months National Capital Atari User's Group Disk of the Month, number fourteen, you will find these associated arc files:

ARC.TTP - The Archive program.
ARC.DOC - The ARC documentation.
ARCSHELL.PRG - ARC Mouse interface.
ARCSHELL.RSC - ARCSHELL resource file.

There are three ways in which arc may be operated. The first, and most popular, method is to use ARCSHELL.PRG. This program allows the user to enter the main file options and secondary options by clicking on them with the mouse and then the shell program will send these parameters to the ARC.TTP program. The second way is to use a dos shell or a command line editor. For this method the arc program must be renamed to ARC.PRG. The user must first enter ARC followed by the main file option and the secondary options. Then arc will perform the desired compression. The final method of activating arc is touse arc as a Tos Takes Parameters (TTP) program. The user must first double-click on the ARC.TTP program and then enter the main file options and the secondary options alll on the parameter line. I have found the arc shell method to be the easiest as well as the quickest way to accomplish what I wanted to do. I think if someone wishes to use a dos shell or a command line editor they should have bought an IBM instead. These dos shells are considerably less forgiving than the arc shell. Also, the .TTP method of running arc is limited in the amount of characters that can be entered on the parameter line.

Upon loading the ARCSHELL.PRG the user is presented with a box divided into two parts, main file options and secondary options.

MAIN FILE OPTIONS

ADD to archive - add files to archive. This command will create an archive if the specified does not exist.

EXTRACT from archive - extract files from archive. File are copied in an uncompacted format.

RUN from archive - run one file from within a archive in its compacted state.

MOVE to archive - same as add except that files are deleted from directory after being added to the archive.

UPDATE in archive
COPY to StdOut
FRESHEN in archive

LIST in archive - removes a file from the archive and then recompacts the archive.

DELETE from archive - removes a file from the acrhive and then recompacts the archive.

VERBOSE LIST - complete information list, includes filename, previous file size, arc'ed file size, percent savings, storage method and file date.

TEST archive integrity
CONVERT to new packing method

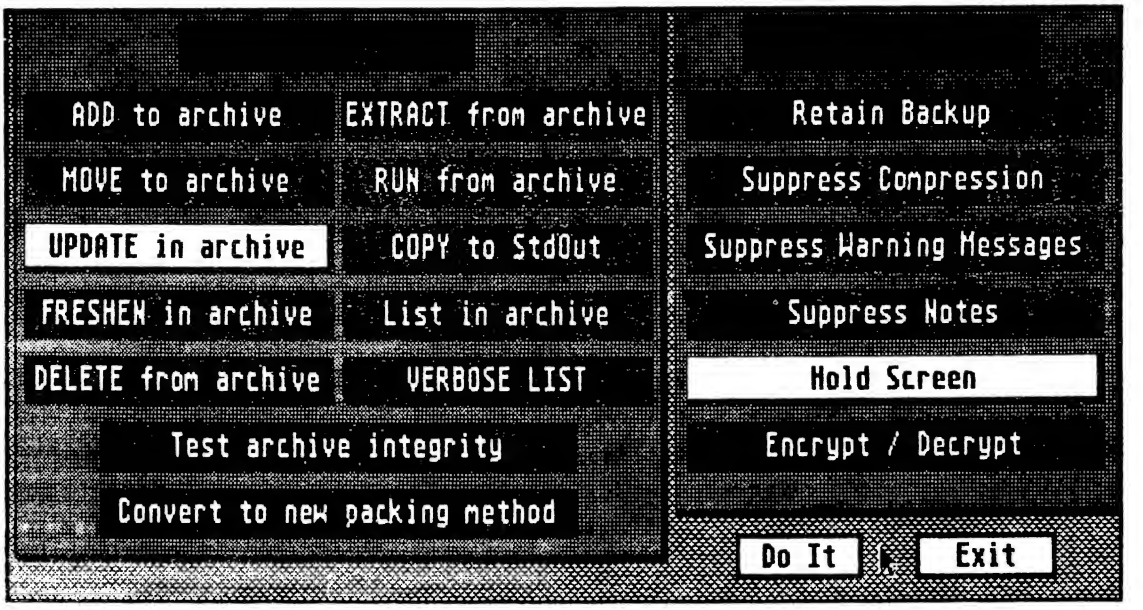
The above items that have descriptions are the more commonly used arc functions.

SECONDARY OPTIONS

Retain backup - renames old archive .BAK and creates a new one still retaining the old version.

Suppress Compression - files saved without compression.

Suppress warning messages - no warning messages are displayed after deletion or existence of files with the same name.



Hold Screen - holds screen after compaction is complete as returning to the GEM desktop will erase the screen and all information in it.

Encrypt/Decrypt - used to encode files so that no one else may read them.

When using ARC in the TTP method, to un-arc a file this is how it should be done:

After double-clicking on ARC.TTP enter the following: XH TEST.ARC TEST.DOC.

This will eXtract the file TEST.DOC and will also Hold the screen from going back to the GEM desktop preventing data from being erased from the screen before being able to be read.

SAMPLE FILE COMPRESSION

This first compression IS OF THE MAIN FILES ON GST 1ST Word disk, excluding printer drivers.

1ST_WORD.PRG 1ST_WORD.RSC
1ST_PRNT.PRG GUIDE.DOC
TUTORIAL.DOC

Five files * size (225,800 bytes)

ARC -> One file * size (117,064 bytes)
Average of 49% reduction

EZSQUEEZE -> Five files * size (155,372 bytes) Average of 31% reduction

This second compression example is of two Degas pictures featured on the covers of past Bytown Bytes by our own Glenn Brown.

MIAMICE.PI1 PORSCHE.PI1

Each file is 32,034 bytes in length

	MIAMICE.PI1	PORSCHE.PI1
ARC	12,948 (60 %)	14,555 (55 %)
EZSQUEEZ	15,006 (53 %)	15,127 (53 %)

The last is the compression of the Documentation fro GST 1ST Word.

GUIDE.DOC size (79,624 bytes)

	GUIDE.DOC
ARC	37,181 (53 %)
EZSQUEEZ	48,380 (39 %)

From the above examples I have found ARC to be much better than EZSQUEEZ. When it comes to compressing pictures ARC is only marginally better than EZSQUEEZ. When text files are to be compressed, you can expect ARC to compress files on the average ten percent greater than EZSQUEEZ. When it is programs that are being compressed. ARC is on the average twenty percent superior to EZSQUEEZ.

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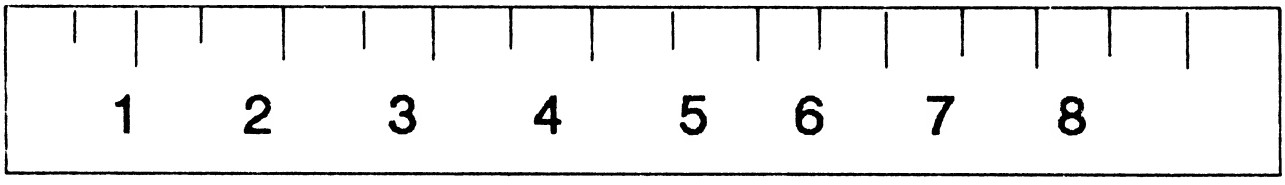

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BIATHLON

WORLD GAMES

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Sumo Wrestling
Bull Riding
Barrel Jumping
Log Rolling
Weight Lifting
Slalom Skiing
Caber Toss

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729 — 0448

WORLD GAMES by EPYX

Epyx has released another attempt to dazzle our desktops with the next in their popular "Games" series. After the ST version of Winter Games we now have World Games, consisting of 8 events from around the globe.

Epyx has a funny little rating system for their software - a joystick for action, a naked thinking person on a toilet for strategy and a mortarboard for learning. This game was rated an action and a strategy. The strategy must be the hours of reading needed to interpret the instuction booklet. The action I can understand because this game has a lot of it.

The main idea of the game is to compete in 8 international events representing different countries. A joystick is required, unlike Winter Games where you could use the keyboard. I found some events in that game were easier with the keyboard. Instead of 7 of your friends watching while you play, they can all play with the 8 player mode. What singles this game out from others is the joystick movements which control the body of the person on the screen. For instance, in Barrel Jumping, you can move one step with each movement; if you have his right foot forward, he can't move his right foot again until he moves his left.

The first event is Weightlifting from Russia. Weightlifting itself is divided into two mini-events, the Snatch and Clean and Jerk, both similar. I found the Clean and Jerk a lot easier although it is more complicated because there are more joystick movements involved.

Next comes Cliff Diving, my favorite event because of the simple joystick movements. A perfect 100 score is awarded for not barrelling your head into the ocean floor, not rubbing your ankles across the second level ledge, and not performing a stomach-ache belly flop.

Ok we're in Germany for the Barrel Jump. I found this event fun and simple, BUT...if you have a new joystick, the frantic moves will sure break it in. The trick to this event is not so much jumping the barrels but getting up your speed to full before you jump. The maximum number of barrels you may jump is 20 and the minimum is 4. If you clear 20 there's not much more you can do.

Then comes Bull Riding from a rodeo. This event is impossible. There doesn't seem to be any reason to fall off or stay on the stupid bull. Even though the book gives clear instructions, the joystick is too slow for the bull's movements.

In Log Rolling you have to make your opponent dive bomb into the water in the least amount of time. Your opponent can either be the computer or another player. By controlling the player's feet, the log rolls just like in real life.

A big improvement over the last two events is Slalom Skiing. You have 2 attempts to make your way down the snow-covered hill while going between the red and blue flags without hitting one. Hitting a flag will result in disqualification. This event would be better if you had at least 4 tries (because being disqualified for hitting one flag is a bit harsh).

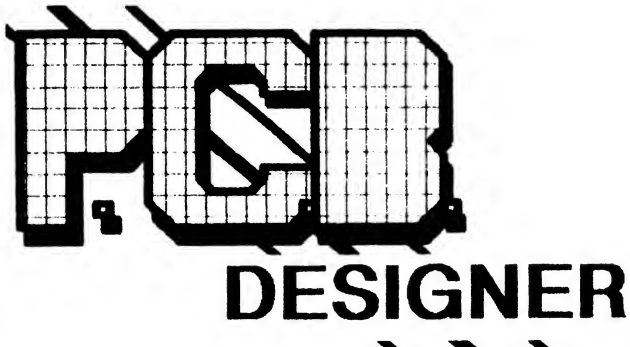
Our next scene is Scotland for the Caber Toss. Does tossing a telephone pole sound easy to you? This is another of those wear-out-your-joystick events. You press the button to get ready to throw and some 2 seconds later you release it. A big difference from playing Time Bandits. It is possible in this event to get yourself planted by the caber if you throw it at the wrong time.

Finally comes Sumo Wrestling. You saw that last sentence and thought it would be great right? Wrong. The moves are great and all, but it happens so fast you can hardly see those fat tummies on the wrestlers. If there was a way to slow this event down I'd have more to say. But.....

The other features for the game are probably what make this game above average. If I didn't want to create players, I could practice an event, or only compete in some. The goofs are a big part of this game. Goofs are a funny little mess up that in real life would kill a person. It's good to see imagination in game writers. The people at Epyx have done a fantastic job with graphics and music. They've gone this far.....why not go all the way. How does "Universal Games" sound to you?

Lastly, I wold like to thank the people at Mr. Diskette for helping to provide the software for this review.

Steve Webb



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REVIEWED BY
DON KRETZ

Well here we have a program that techies should be drooling over. Techies with money! The PC Board Designer is impressively packaged in a 7 1/2 x 9 inch three ring binder in a box(a la IBM). A single diskette contains the PCB DESI.PRG(65K) and 200K of support files and examples of circuits to get you going. Unfortunately the disk is copy protected so a complete working copy cannot be made using TOS; the master disk must be in drive A to initialize the program. The documentation is extensive and appears very complete. Although my second copy of the manual is missing most of the library definitions. The pages are single sided so you get a thick binder. Nice for making notes on facing blank pages.

FEATURES

The big features of PCBoard Designer are its ability to **autoroute** and **"rubberband"** the components. The program can only be used with a monochrome monitor, a necessary evil that allows a very detailed working screen. Using PCBoard Designer you can design single sided, double sided plated through, and double sided not plated through the hole boards. And if you are really adventurous, you might even try multi layer boards, but registration could turn out to be a nightmare. The maximum board size is currently 6.3 inches by 4.4 inches and the minimum is 1.15 inches by 1.15 inches. The reason I say "currently" is that since I've had the PCBoard Designer program, I've received an update changing the board dimensions to this size. I suspect more changes may be in the offing as this current size may limit the usefulness of this product on the professional market.

PCBoard Designer is GEM based and very "user friendly", with a plethora of menus available, but you must become familiar with the protocol of the program to achieve this state. Desk accessories are disabled by the program, a nice touch which solves any "conflict" problems, but a pain to those who must have their favorite accessories running all the time. Auto Routing of your board is probably my favorite feature. Simply lay out the components on the screen, load the appropriate connections list and watch it go. Now you know nothing nothing ever works the first time so you must bring into play another feature of the PCBoard Designer. Changing the layout of your components manually to achieve optimum routing. You can even force routing in a preferred direction (X or Y), and routing of your traces can be in 45 or 90 degrees using two widths.

The evolution of the circuit board starts with a schematic diagram, a board diagram and a components list.

Output to a printer is of course a feature essential to this program. The whole object is to produce camera ready hard copy so that positives can be made thereby allowing you or someone to successfully etch the board you designed. The PCBoard Designer does a nice job of this task. The first copy I had would not print out on my "100%" Epson compatible Panasonic 1091. In fact when I contacted Abacus about this problem they were not familiar with the 1091. However the software update I received works just fine. Printer outputs are top and bottom of board, component plan silkscreen, connection list, component list, and a pinhole output for drilling.

USING THE PROGRAM

Once loaded you have a screen divided into a work area (most of the screen), a list area (right side), and a command strip at the bottom. To produce a board you must generate three files; a component library file, a circuit file and a board file. The evolution of a circuit board starts with a schematic diagram, a board diagram and a components list. Then to tie all these together you need a connections list. PCBoard Designer allows you to design all

necessary components in a separate program called DEF.PRG. Here you work on a screen divided into a grid of 50 thousands of an inch centers. You can draw to scale all necessary components and connectors including pin numbering. Once completed these are saved in a .LIB file. OK we're now ready to start making our board. First you have to make up your connections list. Then you must enter both the connections list and components list using an input editor. This is a tedious task which is done automatically on some CAD programs for the IBM. Perhaps a companion schematic program will be forthcoming in the near future.....but there is a plus in the next step, positioning the components. You can select components and move them any where on the board, including rotation, all with "rubber band" connections. That is where the components stay connected while you move them around so you can easily see the best position for routing the traces. Once you have a position that looks good try "autorouting" and check the results. Repeat this a few times. Its really interesting to see the effect of positioning on the circuit routing. Of course you have manual control to clean up some of the quirks of "autorouting". About now you could size the circuit board. You may have to do this a number of times during the component positioning to obtain the optimum size.

The connections list can be altered to aid the "autorouter". When the connections list is first set up you must assign "attributes" to each point to point connection. These are 45 or 90 degrees, to a trace or to a pad, wide or narrow etc. After viewing what the "autorouter" has produced you may want to change the attributes to streamline the routing. You may also want to place blockades or reserve areas for special purposes. No problem. In fact once you have the data necessary to produce your board its a lot of fun trying different sizes, routing etc.

CONSTRAINTS

The first and most obvious is the board size. For the hobbiest it is probably adequate but as a "professional computer aided design" package it falls short of the needs of the electronics industry. And while it may be suitable for the hobbiest, the price places it out of the reach of most.

The lack of a schematic drawing program which would automatically generate a connections list.

The documentation, while quite good in content, lacks the gloss and flash you should expect in a package costing this much.

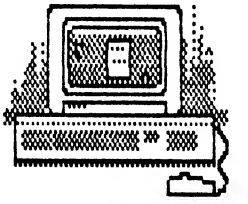
The autorouter sometimes goes into never-never land, but fortunately it can be recovered by ESCaping.

And my final observation is that not all connectors or components are registered on centers divisible by 50 thou. Although the majority are, so this should not present to much of a problem.

CONCLUSION

This article is only an overview of a very powerful CAD program. Please don't be mislead by the apparent ease with which you can set up a PCBoard. The PCBoard Designer is not for the novice. It is like all good computer programs. A useful tool in the hands of the right person.

Abacus states that the goal of PCBoard Designer is "To save time, effort and money required to design a working printed circuit board". I think it will.



LAWS OF COMPUTING

Confidence is the feeling you get just before you fully understand the problem.

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You always find the information you need on the page of the manual you look at last.

The first place to look for information is in the section you least expect to find it.

You know you have a *real* crisis on your hands when you can't say "Let's forget the whole thing".

STARGLIDER

by Rainbird Software

Review by Ted McNicol

AWESOME. This "game" demonstrates that the joys of vector graphics have arrived on your ATARI screen. The full 16 bits are humming with this one.

You begin by reading (carefully) a novella in order to learn how to really fly this bird. The AGAV you are piloting is the sole weapon between the invaders of Novenia and the rest of the galaxy. You are faced with a myriad of opponents, ranging from immobile bunkers to tanks to such aerial opponents as skimmers, bute fighters, and of course the star glider itself. And just to make your day, huge stompers and walkers (remember The Empire Strikes Back) keep leaving their missile-firing droppings all over the horizon.

The AGAV has the advantage of speed and firepower. Silos keep you stocked up with missiles, repair your ship and recharge your shields. Provided of course you can figure out how to dock. How you recharge your flight energy is another problem, which requires deft manouvering, often under enemy fire.

I have managed to chock up almost 20,000 in my almost non-stop playing (between work periods). From the first moment I was given manual control, I was hooked. This is a very difficult game to master and is certainly unmerciful. But what fun you can have being decimated from all sides.

The game itself was developed entirely using the ST Devpac from Hi-Soft, which means it takes advantage of the speed of assembly language routines. I'm amazed by the way I can slam on the brakes, spin around and head off after some spineless alien craft which has just passed me. The responsiveness of the graphics makes it seem like you really are out there battling for your life.

This is now the number one game for the ATARI ST, at least in my library. It will be hard to beat, but it whets my appetite for the future. As all gamers know: "The ultimate piece of software is the next one".

But don't wait. Buy this one. You won't be disappointed. You will be destroyed. Again and again. But you and your AGAV will return. After all, Novenia is counting on you.

COMDEX/Fall '86 continued from page 7

for the computer impressed the heck out of not only Atari distributors and users, but everyone at COMDEX. Atari means BUSINESS. And, still there's more.

Not all of the new Atari computer products were being displayed at the Atari booth. Many companies had their own booths at COMDEX. The following are the highlights: Supra Corporation was showing their line of 20, 30 and 60 megabyte hard drives for the Atari ST and 8-bit computers as well as the Mac and introduced a tape back-up unit for use with their hard drives (list $799); SubLogic was showing Flight Simulator II for many types of computers, including the ST; Michtron were demonstrating VIVA (Video Disk Controller) by playing Journey into the Lair (Dragon's Lair in the arcades) as well as their new MIDI Sequencer, called Super Conductor, expected to be released in Jan '87 ; and, Analog Computing Magazine were pushing their new ST-Log magazine at their own booth. ST's also showed up at the booths of other companies. Namely, at Batteries Included, Abacus Software, Buzzword Game Co., Soft-Kat publishers; VersaSoft and at various other software houses around the halls of COMDEX.

As you can see, the Atari ST line of computers is definitely being supported by a wide array of excellent companies producing a fine selection of software. The visibility of Atari at COMDEX seems to have entrenched them as contenders, not only in the home computing industry, but also, in the world of business computing. It would seem that the ST has begun to achieve the popularity it deserves as it certainly is one of the finest computers available.

I hope that I've been able to pass on to you, through this article, all of the excitement around Atari these days. I can only imagine that this is the start of something very big! I can't wait until next year! In the meantime, as you can see by the list of new products, you will be able to get more enjoyment and productivity from your Atari computer. After all, that's why you bought your computer in the first place!!

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